



A Ladybird book about

# PIRATES











**Series 707**

**From the time of Queen Elizabeth I to that of George IV, conditions in England—poverty, bad housing, harsh laws, lack of sanitation, plague and primitive medical facilities—made life short and uncertain for most of the population. There were no police, and a masked highwayman waiting on a lonely road might rob a coach and escape capture. Many rogues found highway robbery more rewarding than trying to earn an honest living.**

**In those days a man might legally be seized in the street by a 'press-gang' and compelled to serve for years as a sailor in a ship of the King's Navy, often without his wife and family knowing what had happened to him. Sailors were badly fed and brutally punished, and sometimes they mutinied, murdered their hated officers and became pirates in well-armed ships.**

**Pirates—and highwaymen—were mainly scoundrels and a menace to all honest folk. They were not the romantic heroes suggested by many stories, and many of them came to the sort of end they so richly deserved.**





**Series 707**



A Ladybird book about  
**PIRATES**

by  
**L. DU GARDE PEACH,**  
M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt.

with illustrations by  
**F. HUMPHRIS**



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**When one sets sail today on a cruise in the Mediterranean, or down the coast of Africa, or across to the West Indies, it is not necessary to keep a sharp look-out for pirates. Thanks largely to the British Navy, pirates are no longer amongst the dangers to be met with on the high seas.**

**But if you had embarked on any of these voyages in the time of Queen Elizabeth I, or for more than two hundred years afterwards, somebody on the ship would have been keeping a very sharp look-out indeed. Between the years 1550 and 1750 there were literally hundreds of pirates roving the seas, boarding and sinking ships, cutting throats, and then retiring to some snug anchorage, often in the West Indies, to enjoy or to bury the treasure they had taken.**

**Although it was the British Navy which played the largest part in stopping piracy, most of the pirates were from the British Isles.**

**It is true that many of them were caught and hanged: others buried their treasure on some remote island, hoping to come back for it later. Some of these buried hoards are still there, and even today expeditions are organised to search for them. It is a romantic occupation, but one which is rarely successful. The lure of the ancient sea-stained map remains, with the cross marking the spot where the old iron-bound chest full of pieces of eight is waiting.**







# Captain Kidd

One of the most famous of all pirates, whose name is known to every schoolboy, was Captain Kidd. Actually he could scarcely be called a pirate at all. The son of a parson, he was born in Scotland in 1655, and was commissioned to command what was called a 'privateer', when he was in his early thirties.

A privateer was a ship given legal authority to search out and destroy the ships of the King's or Queen's enemies. It was paid for by perfectly respectable persons who took a share of the profits of the voyage, either by the sale of captured ships or the treasure taken out of them.

In 1695 William III, King of England, gave Captain Kidd, whom he called his "beloved friend, William Kidd", the command of a privateer named *Adventure*, with orders to suppress piracy off the coast of America.

Captain Kidd was unlucky. He captured some ships in the service of France, which he had a perfect right to do as Britain and France were at war at the time. But when he arrived at New York with ninety bars of gold, he was arrested as a pirate and executed, not for piracy but for killing a mutinous member of his crew by hitting him over the head with a bucket. In the charge sheet the bucket is carefully described as being of the value of eight pence!







# **Captain Henry Morgan**

A luckier pirate was Captain Henry Morgan, a Welshman, born the son of a wealthy farmer in Wales in the year 1635. He was also fortunate in that his uncle, Colonel Morgan, was Deputy Governor of Jamaica. This being so, Henry naturally went to the West Indies to seek his fortune.

There is a story that Henry Morgan was kidnapped in Wales and sold as a slave in Barbados, but this is not true. In fact he was soon in command of a number of privateers, in one of which he narrowly escaped being killed by an explosion whilst giving a banquet to his assembled captains.

Morgan's greatest exploit was the crossing of the swampy snake-infested Isthmus of Panama, and the capture and sacking of the city. He returned to his ship with 200 mules laden with gold and silver. But instead of sharing it out with his men, he sailed away secretly in the dead of night, leaving them without ships, provisions, or any share in the vast treasure except a few guineas each.

On his return to Jamaica, instead of putting him in prison the Council passed a vote of thanks to him for his services. A year later Morgan was arrested and sent to England to be tried as a pirate. Then a most extraordinary thing happened. For some reason he was acquitted, knighted by Charles II, and returned to Jamaica as Deputy Governor!

*Captain Henry Morgan and his men cross the swampy, snake-infested Isthmus of Panama*







# **Captain Teach**

Very much more like the pirate of fiction was Captain Teach, known as Blackbeard. His appearance was terrifying enough: he was a large brutal-looking man, with a huge beard which grew high on his cheeks and reached half-way down his chest. When going into action he plaited his beard into a number of tails, each tied with a coloured ribbon. With two pairs of pistols, and lighted matches stuck in his hat, Captain Teach was a sight never forgotten by those unfortunate enough to meet him.

One of his amusements was to invite a number of his officers to dine with him in his cabin. Then he would suddenly blow out the light and fire off his pistols under the table.

As a pirate he was extremely successful. With a fine ship which he had captured in 1717 and armed with 40 guns, he spread terror all along the coast of America. Then, having taken and looted many ships, he calmly went ashore and demanded a free pardon from the Governor of North Carolina. There is not the slightest doubt that he shared with him the stolen treasure in exchange for the pardon.

He was less generous with his crew. Having taken some rich booty, he landed his men on a small desert island and sailed away with a few of his boon companions. His luck did not last. He was hunted down by a ship of the British Navy and died in the action which followed, wounded in twenty-five places.







# Captain Bonnet

A very different sort of pirate was Captain Bonnet. He was a gentleman, had been a Major in the British Army, and was a married man with a fine house in Barbados and the respect of all the better people in the island. Then, with no warning, he bought a ship, gathered a crew, and sailed away without even saying goodbye to his wife.

Captain Bonnet knew nothing about sailing or seamanship, but he must have known something about fighting. On his first cruise he took and plundered four ships. Then, having sold the proceeds, he moved on to the Carolinas. Here he had the misfortune to meet with Captain Teach, alias Blackbeard.

For a while they sailed together, but Blackbeard soon saw that Bonnet was of no use as a sailor. So he took over his ship and marooned the crew. But luck was against Captain Teach. Bonnet recovered his ship, rescued his sailors and, thirsting for revenge, sailed away to search for Blackbeard. He did not find him. Instead, he had the misfortune to meet with a ship sent out from South Carolina to capture him. He was taken prisoner, tried, and duly hanged.

Mistakenly, many people were sorry for him. They said that he had been driven to piracy by his nagging wife, and was really not responsible for his actions. The other interesting thing about Captain Bonnet is that he was one of the few pirates actually to make his victims walk the plank—something which seems to happen in every pirate story, regardless of the true facts.

*A prisoner walking the plank blindfold, with a jeering crowd of ruffianly pirates watching him*







# Captain William Dampier

Captain William Dampier, who is often quoted as an example of a bold, bad pirate, was in fact a mild man compared with other pirates. He was really a naturalist who occasionally practised a little piracy on the side, more or less by accident.

Dampier was born in 1652, in the reign of Charles II, and being of an adventurous disposition he left the shopkeeper to whom he had been apprenticed and ran away to sea. He shipped aboard a vessel sailing out of Weymouth, and from then onwards he was rarely ashore. Twice he circumnavigated the globe, sometimes sailing the seven seas as a King's officer, sometimes as a buccaneer. He never seems to have made much money as a pirate, though a story persists about a treasure buried by him in Northern Australia and never recovered. But wherever he went he made notes of everything he saw, and his books became famous.

Whilst at sea he kept these notes in a hollow piece of bamboo, plugging the ends with wax to keep them dry.

Dampier seems to have been equally willing to sail as a pirate or as an honest citizen. He wanted to see the world, and to find out all he could about strange lands and animals. His piratical adventures were in short spells in various parts of the world, and in one of them, in 1680, he visited the island of Juan Fernandez. More than twenty years later he sailed in company with Alexander Selkirk, whom Daniel Defoe used as his model for Robinson Crusoe. In his story; Defoe also wrote about the island of Juan Fernandez. (See Alexander Selkirk, page 26.)

*Captain Dampier makes notes about  
wild flowers and plants*







# Captain Gow

Many pirates started their careers at sea as honest sailors. Then for some reason a crew would mutiny, possibly dissatisfied with their treatment by the captain and the officers. To cut the throats of the captain and officers and throw them overboard, seemed to such a crew in those days the best way of settling an argument. The crew could obviously not return to England, so they would elect a captain and officers from amongst themselves and sail away 'on the account', which was another name for piracy.

This is exactly what happened to Captain Gow. He was a Scot, and when the crew of a ship named the *George* mutinied, he was elected captain. The ship was armed with 18 guns and she was re-named the *Revenge*. He and his pirates were then ready for action.

Theirs was not a very heroic beginning. To their disgust, the first two ships they captured were loaded with nothing but fish. After stupidly attempting to sell them in the Orkneys, where all the inhabitants lived by catching fish, these incompetent pirates tried a little burglary, but were unsuccessful. Then they were foolish enough to call attention to themselves by marching back to their ship, led by a piper playing bagpipes.

The end of Gow's inglorious career as a pirate was near. Half his crew deserted at Kirkwall: the others adjourned to a local public house where they were all soon captured. Gow himself was executed in 1725.

*Captain Gow and his men march back  
to their ship led by a piper*







# Barbarossa

Captain Teach was known as Blackbeard: the Barbary pirate Uruj was called Barbarossa, which means red beard, for the same reason—the colour of his beard. He was born on a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, and by 1504 he was sailing out of Tunis as a pirate. In return for permission to use the port, the Sultan received a share of his plunder.

Barbarossa was a Mediterranean pirate, and never ventured far beyond the straits of Gibraltar. There were plenty of rich prizes nearer home. His first venture was to seize two treasure ships belonging to no less a person than the Pope. He was no doubt promptly excommunicated, but this would not have caused him any concern as he was a Mohammedan.

Barbarossa mainly confined his piracy to ships of Christian traders, but he was also willing to fight for anyone who would pay him. Those people who did employ him usually regretted it. When the natives of Algiers asked Barbarossa to help them against the Spaniards, he gathered an army and destroyed the Spanish forces. He then celebrated the victory by murdering the men who had invited his help, and making himself Sultan.

Barbarossa remained a pirate, although he himself did not sail a ship but sent ships to prey upon merchantmen from Italy, Spain and, whenever they could meet with them, from England. Finally he was defeated and slain, but it required a Spanish army of 10,000 men to do it.

*An angry Pope hears of the capture  
of two of his ships by Barbarossa*







# Mary Read

Mary Read was undoubtedly a woman of great spirit. That she was also a pirate may seem strange: piracy has always been regarded as a man's job.

Long before she became a pirate, Mary had had plenty of practice in posing as a man. She had been brought up like a boy, playing a boy's games and becoming as tough as any boy in the slums of London. At the age of thirteen or fourteen she ran away to sea and shipped aboard a man-o'-war. Deserting after a few years, she joined the army and fought in Flanders with great bravery. Then one day Mary fell in love with a Fleming in the regiment. They were duly married and many of the officers attended this unusual ceremony.

Discharged from the army, Mary and her soldier husband kept a public house. When he died, Mary joined a ship bound for the West Indies. She joined as an ordinary sailor and again dressed as a man. When this ship was captured by pirates, Mary joined them.

Involved in another ship's mutiny, Mary found herself cruising with another woman pirate, Anne Bonny, during which time many ships were taken. Mary Read became as tough a character, and as ruthless a fighter, as any pirate sailing the seas.

Soon her days as a pirate were over: she died in prison in 1720.







# **Anne Bonny**

Anne Bonny was very different from Mary Read, though equally tough. Mary became tough through being brought up in a London slum: Anne was the daughter of a rich lawyer who had emigrated to Carolina. Apart from bursts of violent passion, in one of which she stabbed and killed her English maid, Anne kept house for her father like any other dutiful daughter.

In order to forestall her father, who was looking for a husband for her, Anne secretly married a young sailor. When her father heard of it, he turned Anne out of doors without a penny. The young sailor, who thought he had secured a rich wife, disappeared and was never heard of again.

Anne did not weep for her lost husband. Instead, she ran away to sea with a handsome dashing young pirate, Captain John Rackam, known as 'Calico Jack'.

Disguised as a sailor, Anne found full scope for her aggressive nature. When a ship was attacked, she was always one of the first to board it, striking out right and left with her cutlass, and when Captain Rackam captured the ship containing Mary Read, Anne had a worthy companion. The two women were determined to be as good fighters as the men. Their opportunity soon came. In 1720 they were attacked by an armed vessel sent out from Jamaica to capture them. The faint-hearted pirates proved to be cowards and scrambled below, but Anne Bonny and Mary Read fought on.

*Anne and Mary continue to fight  
after the other pirates had run away*







# **Captain Nelson**

**Captain Nelson, no relation of the hero of Trafalgar, was an American. His father was rich and respected, and to give his son a good start in life he bought a farm for him on Prince Edward Island. Here young Nelson married and settled down. He grew potatoes and fruit, and soon he was able to buy a small ship in which he took his produce to market.**

**All this was very peaceful and respectable, and Nelson much enjoyed the sea trips. But one day he got into disgrace on the island, and when he bought what he called "a pretty little New York battleship" it was the beginning of his career as a pirate.**

**He joined up with a Scot named Morrison, armed the ship with 10 guns, recruited a crew of desperate characters, and turned to piracy. By successfully attacking English, Dutch and a score of other ships, which they sold in New York, the two became rich men in the course of three years.**

**Nelson's reputation had made all the peaceful citizens on the American seaboard fear him. When he returned to Prince Edward Island to see his wife, no-one dared to attempt to arrest him. Again he sailed, but his ship was wrecked in a fog, and his partner Morrison drowned. Nelson was neither arrested nor hanged. One of the most brutal of pirates, he lived peacefully in New York with his wife and family for the rest of his life.**







# Alexander Selkirk

Alexander Selkirk, made famous by Daniel Defoe, was probably not a pirate at all. A Scot, born in Fife and the son of a shoemaker, he was an unruly young man. After quarrelling with many of his neighbours, he left home and in 1703 sailed to the South Seas with a Naval squadron commanded by Captain Dampier.

Naval discipline was too much for Alexander. After a quarrel with the captain of his ship, the *Cinque Ports*, of which he was sailing-master, he apparently decided to seek solitude. The ship was in the South Pacific at the time, off the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez. Only four years earlier half the crew had deserted to the same island, though later taken off again by Captain Dampier. Alexander Selkirk liked the look of the island and asked to be put ashore.

Selkirk took with him all his belongings, and for four years he lived by hunting the goats which were plentiful. Defoe's story tells of Robinson Crusoe having a companion, Man Friday, but Selkirk lived entirely alone.

Juan Fernandez is described as a beautiful island with rich vegetation, but after four years Selkirk had had enough of it. When two ships appeared off the coast, he lit a signal fire. *The Duchess of Bristol* sent a boat ashore, and Alexander Selkirk was rescued. The remainder of his life was relatively uneventful. Whether the booty with which he returned to his native land was the result of piracy has never been proved, but it is quite possible that it was.

*Alexander Selkirk hunts goats  
on the Island of Juan Fernandez*







# Captain Misson

Pirates have been made into romantic figures by the story books, but in reality most of them were cold-hearted scoundrels, a menace to peaceful folk. Captain Misson was very different. Described by the poet Byron as "the mildest-mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat" he was a gentleman of good education who became a very unusual pirate.

His first voyage was in a French man-o'-war, the *Victoire*. He was a conscientious sailor, and learnt all he could about seamanship and navigation. Then, on a visit to Rome, he met a priest who gave up the Church and returned with Misson to the *Victoire*.

Soon, in a fight with an English warship, the captain and many of the officers of the *Victoire* were killed. The crew of the French ship now mutinied and chose Misson as their captain. They decided to turn to piracy under the banner of the Peoples Rights and Liberties. These very peculiar pirates captured and looted many ships, but in such a gentlemanly way that their victims, who were often allowed to keep their ships, saluted them with three cheers as they sailed away.

Having amassed a considerable amount of money, the pirates sailed to an island in the Indian Ocean. Captain Misson married the sister of the coloured queen, and founded a socialist state which he named Libertatia. It flourished for some years until Misson was unfortunately drowned in a hurricane.

*The crew of a captured ship line the bulwarks and cheer Captain Misson*







# Captain Cobham

Captain Cobham, of Poole in Dorset, was a successful smuggler at the age of eighteen. On one occasion he landed ten thousand gallons of brandy without interference.<sup>1</sup> But the capture of his smuggling craft by a preventive cutter discouraged him. So he bought a cutter of his own, armed her with 14 guns, and, like so many other adventurous young men of his time, he turned to piracy.

Within weeks he had captured a merchant ship out of which he took £40,000. He sank the ship, drowned the crew, and sailed happily to Plymouth to celebrate. It was here that he met a bloodthirsty young woman named Maria. She returned to the ship with him, and although Cobham was a godless scoundrel, Maria was worse.

Woe to anyone captured by Captain and Maria Cobham! Sailing off the coast of Prince Edward Island they captured and looted a number of ships. The sailors of one of them were all tied up in sacks and thrown into the sea: Maria herself stabbed the captain of another. On another occasion this unpleasant young woman had the captain and officers tied to the windlass and shot the three of them. She thought nothing of poisoning the entire crew of a captured Indiaman.

Instead of coming to the end which they so richly deserved, this dreadful couple, having made a fortune by murder and piracy, bought a large estate in France. Cobham lived to a ripe old age, much respected as a magistrate, but Maria poisoned herself.







# Captain Derdrake

Captain Derdrake, known as Jack of the Baltic, was a Dane from Copenhagen. Dismissed from a dockyard for drunkenness, and being left a small fortune, he built a fast-sailing brig and traded between Norway and London. A quarrel in which he killed a man in Russia made him an outlaw: piracy was the only career left open to him.

He armed the stolen ship in which he had left Russia, and was almost immediately attacked by a Russian warship. The Russian crew surrendered and Derdrake took over the much larger ship, re-naming her the *Sudden Death*. He now had a fine well-armed ship, with a mixed English, Danish and Norwegian crew, numbering some seventy choice scoundrels.

Derdrake confined his activities to the Baltic, the sea which he knew best. He took a number of rich prizes, drowning the crews and selling the cargoes in Sweden. Like Captain Bonnet he occasionally amused himself by making his victims walk the plank.

The Governor of St. Petersburg sent two warships to capture Derdrake, but in the meantime the pirates had taken a ship in which was the Governor's sister. Derdrake, who had news of the Governor's expedition, stabbed the unfortunate sister and threw her body overboard. There was now no mercy to be expected. Although his crew were taken and brutally executed, Derdrake escaped and lived for fourteen years in luxury on an estate in Germany. In the end he was recognised by a sailor, arrested and hanged.







# Captain Charles Vane

Captain Charles Vane who, like so many other pirates before and after him, operated off the coast of the Carolinas, had a very mixed career. When the British Government sent warships to the Bahamas to clean up the pirate base in 1718, Vane heard of their approach. He impudently sailed out of the bay as they entered, politely saluting them as they passed. The salute was equally politely returned by the British ships.

Vane sailed to the Carolinas, and after stealing the silver which was being salvaged from a sunken galleon off Florida, he cruised up and down the coast, taking and sinking ships. Here he met with that other rogue—Blackbeard. After greeting one another by firing off loaded guns, they enjoyed a few days of mutually suspicious hospitality.

Vane then suffered a humiliating reverse. He refused to attack a French warship, and his crew, accusing him of cowardice, set him adrift with one or two others in a small sloop. Vane had managed to capture a much larger ship when disaster overtook him. The ship was wrecked in a hurricane, and he was cast away on a desert island.

Vane was overjoyed when an old friend named Captain Holford called at the island for water. But Holford wisely refused to trust such a notorious pirate aboard his ship. A month later Vane was rescued by a captain who did not know who he was. Unluckily for Vane, Captain Holford returned and came aboard soon afterwards. Vane was recognised, taken to Jamaica, tried and hanged.







# Captain John Avery

Captain John Avery, otherwise known as 'Long Ben', was in his day more famous than any other pirate, and books and even plays were written about him. Born in the reign of Charles II, he went early to sea as the mate of a privateer. Avery very soon persuaded the crew to mutiny, and he took over the ship.

Although Long Ben captured many ships in fair fight, he often took what he wanted without having to fight for it. Running short of supplies off a Portuguese island, he landed a company of fierce-looking ruffians and frightened the Governor into provisioning his ship. On another occasion, off the coast of Guinea, he hoisted the English flag: the natives, who knew they could trust the English, came aboard to trade their gold. They were wrong. Avery seized the gold *and* the natives, whom he very profitably sold as slaves.

These were only side-lines, however. Piracy was his main concern. Intercepting a ship named the *Gunsway*, he took 100,000 pieces of eight out of her, together with the daughter of the Great Mogul, an Indian Prince. It was for a time quite wrongly believed that he had married her and was living in great luxury in Madagascar.

Avery had great powers of persuasion. He managed to persuade all the captains of the pirate fleet to entrust their treasure to him for safe keeping. It was so safe that they never saw it again. In spite of this, Avery ultimately died in poverty in his native county of Devon.

*Captain John Avery steals the gold from the natives,  
and then seizes them for selling as slaves*







# Captain Greaves

Captain Greaves, known as 'Red Legs', was born a slave, the son of a Scottish prisoner sold into slavery in Barbados by Cromwell. He had what was a good education in those days, but when he was sold to a cruel master, he ran away to sea. By mistake he boarded a pirate ship commanded by a very brutal and cruel captain named Hawkins. In this way young Greaves became a pirate.

Probably owing to his experience of a cruel master when he was a slave, Greaves revolted against the torturing or killing of defenceless prisoners. This led to a duel with his captain. According to pirate custom, it was fought out on the shore of an island, and Greaves was the victor. The crew, also according to the custom amongst the pirates, at once elected him as captain.

He was a great success as a pirate, daring and resourceful. Finding a small Spanish fleet in a harbour off Venezuela, he attacked and captured the ships one after the other. He then turned the guns of the captured ships on the fort guarding them, which he also captured. It contained an enormous treasure.

Very wisely he gave up piracy and became a respectable planter. Then one day he was recognised and denounced. In 1688, whilst he was in a dungeon awaiting execution, an earthquake destroyed the prison. Greaves was one of the survivors. It is pleasant to recall that, once more a planter, this unusually kind-hearted planter-pirate lived for many years beloved for his good deeds and generosity.







# Captain Edward Low

Captain Edward Low was everything which a callous, brutal, bloodthirsty pirate could be: that is to say, he was a thorough ruffian. At the same time, like many bullies, he was a coward, leaving his men to do the fighting, and deserting his comrades when things went against them.

He started his disreputable career when only eight years old. In those days men were in the habit of wearing very valuable wigs. Edward was very small and his brother used to carry him in a basket on his back, hidden under a blanket. In a crowd it was easy for little Edward to snatch a wig and hide it in the basket. The victim would look round and see only an innocent man going to market with a harmless basket on his back.

When he was older, an attempt to earn an honest living as a sailor came to an end when he shot the captain. So Low turned to piracy, joining forces with another brutal pirate named Lowther. They became so notorious that a small fleet of warships was sent to capture them.

Unfortunately for Low he mistook one of the warships for a defenceless merchantman, a mistake which he discovered too late. When the fight grew too hot for him, Low sailed away leaving another pirate ship, commanded by a Captain Harris, to be captured. The end of this cowardly and brutal pirate is not known, but it is to be hoped that he got what he deserved.







# Captain Bartholomew Roberts

Very few pirate captains lacked courage: if they did, they did not remain long in command. Cowards were quickly disposed of and replaced: it was not an occupation for weaklings.

Captain Bartholomew Roberts was one of the most daring, as well as one of the most successful pirates ever to sail the seas. He was also unique amongst the Brethren of the Coast, as the pirates called themselves, in that he only drank tea and would allow no drinking or gambling aboard his ships. In one of his prizes he captured a clergyman whom he tried to persuade to join his crew in order that religious services might be held, but the clergyman very wisely refused.

Roberts was born in Wales in 1682. He was fond of fine clothes, and always went into action wearing silk, with feathers in his hat and a gold chain round his neck. He was at first an honest sailor, and when his ship was taken by another Welshman, Captain Davis, a well-known pirate, he at first hesitated to join him. When he finally decided to go 'a-pyrating' he became famous.

Captain Roberts took and plundered more than 400 ships. One of his most daring exploits was in a Brazilian harbour. There he found 40 Portuguese ships ready to sail with rich cargoes. Roberts immediately sailed into the midst of them, selected the largest, which he boarded and captured, and sailed away with a very rich treasure. After ravaging the coasts of many maritime states, he was killed in action.

*Bartholomew Roberts tries to persuade a clergyman to join his crew*







# Captain Howel Davis

Captain Howel Davis, the Welsh pirate who captured Roberts, turned pirate when the merchant ship, the *Cadogan*, in which he was chief mate, was captured by a pirate named England. As the captain of the *Cadogan* had been killed, Davis was elected captain and ordered by Captain England to turn to piracy. Davis was willing, but the crew refused. They sailed the ship to Barbados and Davis was arrested.

As he had never actually committed piracy, Davis was released and given command of a semi-naval ship manned by pirates who had pretended to reform. Once out of sight of land, they naturally returned to the occupation which they preferred. Retaining Davis as captain, they sailed to the Cape Verde Islands. The Governor entertained them royally, under the impression that they were from a King's ship.

When they tried the same trick at St. Jago, a Portuguese island, the Governor saw through it and ordered them to leave at once. Annoyed, the pirates that night attacked, captured, looted and burnt the fort. They had more success with the English Governor at Gambia. After a very pleasant visit, they sailed away with a ship-load of gold bars. There were no casualties on either side.

After capturing a ship with £15,000 in its treasury, Davis was attacked by a ship flying the Jolly Roger. He at once hoisted his own similar flag, and the two pirates sailed away together to Sierra Leone. Here they attacked a ship which also then hoisted the flag with the skull and crossbones. But the three captains soon quarrelled, and Davis was later killed leading an attack.

*Captain Howel Davis and his crew are entertained  
by the Governor of the Cape Verde Islands*







# Captain la Bouche

The ship which sailed in to attack Captain Davis, running up the pirate flag and firing a broadside, was a French ship of 14 guns commanded by Captain la Bouche. When Davis had also hoisted the Jolly Roger, the two captains sailed together to Sierra Leone.

Captain la Bouche and his new friend celebrated their meeting by drinking large quantities of rum and agreeing to work together. But after taking a fort on the mainland, they quarrelled over the division of the plunder. They parted company, and la Bouche sailed away to New Providence Island. He had great success as a pirate, and by 1720 had captured a ship named the *Indian Queen* armed with 28 guns.

The *Indian Queen* was small, only 250 tons. There was in those days nothing unusual in that. Not only pirates, but ordinary merchant traders often sailed in ships of 100 tons or less. There are many records of pirates sailing in what we would today regard as little boats only capable of sailing on quiet rivers, yet crossing the stormiest seas and successfully attacking ships ten times their own size. Often there was little or no resistance. Merchant crews were either too terrified at the mere sight of the pirate flag, or were only too eager for a chance to join the buccaneers.

la Bouche sailed away from the Guinea coast to the East Indies. Here the *Indian Queen* was wrecked on an island near Madagascar. The castaways built boats and canoes, but their end is unknown.

*la Bouche's ship hoists the Jolly Roger  
and fires a broadside*







# **Captain Cocklyn**

The ship which Captain Davis and Captain la Bouche attacked at Sierra Leone, only to find that the crew were pirates like themselves, was commanded by a Captain Cocklyn. He too had served first as an ordinary merchant seaman. When the ship in which he was mate was captured by the pirates, he joined them.

In 1717 he was in the Bahamas when word arrived that a free pardon was to be granted to all pirates who surrendered. Many of the Brethren of the Coast took advantage of the offer, amongst them Thomas Cocklyn.

It is possible, even probable, that many pirates surrendered in order to ship as honest sailors in well-found vessels, which they could take over somewhere on the high seas. That is what happened when Cocklyn and his messmates were well off the coast. By the time he was attacked at Sierra Leone he was in command of what was called a tall ship. This is the name given to a ship with two or more masts and square sails. Pirates were always ready to celebrate: they recognised one another as brethren, even if they were not previously acquainted. The three captains were no exception. For two days and nights they “improved their acquaintance and friendship”—which means that they drank and sang songs and danced together. They then separated and sailed away. Two of them were not heard of again, and the third was killed in an attack. The life of a pirate was very uncertain.







The brief stories of the twenty-two pirates of whom you have read, are very much alike. It frequently happened that when an honest merchant ship was taken by the Brethren of the Coast, the captain and the crew were persuaded or forced to join them. Very often they would seem to have needed little or no persuasion. When the choice was between being killed at once or possibly, but not certainly, hanged at some far-off future time, it was a great temptation to join in with the pirates.

Really to understand the choice before them, we must remember the times in which all these things happened. In those days there was no wireless or radar. When a ship sailed off literally into the blue, there was no knowing where it was, or what had happened to it, until it reached port. Today no ship, however small, anywhere in the world, need ever be out of touch with someone on shore.

If we look at a map of the world, we realise what a lot of sea there is. It covers altogether nearly three-quarters of the globe—more than three hundred and sixty million square miles. The fastest liner takes three or four days to cross the Atlantic, and many more to cross the Pacific Ocean. When we think of those tiny ships, hiding away in the vast expanse of the oceans of the world, or hiding in archipelagoes, not even explored or charted, it is surprising that so many of the Brethren were finally brought to justice.









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